

Scrap-ed and embodied encounters of intergenerational and autobiographical time: Releasing oneself from colonial time-zones

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Abstract

This essay arrives as a special contribution to IEDA from my ongoing PhD research and practice, titled *Intergenerational Archival encounters* (the challenge of the banal, leisurely, and everyday, South Asia WWII 1940s to now). My research introspects and enters with a personal and familial archive. A World War II scrapbook and photo album of a South Asian Indian Muslim soldier fighting the imperial war as a soldier in King George's Own Central India Horse Regiment. My grandfather's archive is filled with opera tickets, laundry bills, group photos with artillery and maps that denote the regiment's movements across the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, and the Mediterranean; it inhabits the leisurely and everyday within the regimental. Scholars and historians such as Gajendra Singh, Ghee Bowmen, Yasmin Khan, and Raghu Kurnad work on historiographical accounts of the contributions and colossal presence of South Asian soldiers in WWII and their conditions, they assert the passive imperial whitewash of the contributions of these soldiers and that there is no WWII internal collective South Asian memory. As a Muslim, Pakistani, South Asian woman in London now, I have taken on the challenge to work with and investigate this persistent coloniality and past and present, quotidian, structural racism through intergenerational archival encounters.

The archive operates more so as a navigational tool in this unfinished history, to establish a biography of the research, encountering relevant archives in institutions such as the British Library and the Imperial War Museum. The archive is a way to account for the conditions of my existence in the present and it operates as an intertemporal and interstellar vehicle for analysing our intergenerational linkages. This enables me to navigate the intergenerational and ask: What's the relation between the colonial violence of the 1940s and its intergenerational links to the present? I approach this by considering David Scott's idea of generations as social institutions of time^[1]. I identify that establishing these intergenerational links between the 1940s and 2020s will require care and curatorial attention to magnify and describe structural racism which inhabits knowledge production/extraction, and allocation of resources among a few of its disguises. I approach this problem with the construction of a conceptual apparatus that is sufficiently attuned to attend to the violence of the uneventful. The Scrap-ed and embodied encounters in this essay arise out of this conceptual apparatus.

Key words: Intergenerational, Scrap-ed, Postcolonial, Quotidian, Leisurely, Violence, Subcontinent, WWII